



Indian Health Service Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HHS Obtains More Ambulances for Tribal Emergency Programs

Four more Tribes are receiving refurbished ambulances as part of the continuing effort of the Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Indian Health Service (IHS) to increase access to care for underserved populations. This will bring the total to 9 ambulances that have been provided to IHS and Tribal emergency medical service (EMS) programs since last July through collaborative efforts of the IHS and the Department of Defense's TRANSAM Project.

"This Administration is committed to ensuring that people in rural areas have access to the same quality of care as everyone else in the country. The lack of emergency transportation vehicles in Indian country is a major issue, especially in very isolated areas," said Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy G. Thompson. "Because of the great distances involved in providing health care in rural areas of the country, having an ambulance available often means the difference between life and death."

This week the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Ambulance Service in Fort Thompson, South Dakota, and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon will receive ambulances. Last week the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Ambulance Service in Lower Brule, South Dakota, and the Big Horn County Ambulance Service in Hardin, Montana, each received an emergency vehicle. The ambulances are similar to the one pictured above, which was one of the ambulances provided to the Choctaw Nation in the first set of deliveries.

"No doubt about it, these ambulances will save lives," said Dr. Charles W. Grim, Interim Director of the Indian Health Service. "The EMS vehicles bring the emergency room to the patient and life-saving procedures can be started and, hopefully, the patient can be stabilized during the journey to the health facility. These ambulances will reduce the time between the adverse health event and the start of treatment."

These EMS vehicles are not Department of Defense surplus vehicles but low-mileage vehicles purchased by TRANSAM from a commercial vendor. The vendor refurbishes them to be mechanically sound to meet state certification requirements and ensures that all medical systems in the vehicle are in working order. The cost of a refurbished vehicle versus a new ambulance saves the government approximately \$65,000.

Secretary Thompson, in his visits to reservations and meetings with Tribal leaders, found that emergency transportation needs were critical to saving lives of those most distant from medical facilities and to those who have no means of transportation. An assessment of the need for EMS vehicles was conducted by the IHS in 2001 of the 80 IHS and Tribal EMS programs. Findings from the survey show that 50% of responding programs did not have a backup EMS vehicle or needed additional vehicles to meet the needs of their communities.

[Click here](#) for the IHS news release on the delivery of the first four ambulances. [Click here](#) for the IHS news release on the delivery of the fifth ambulance.



NOTICE TO EDITORS: For additional information on this subject, please contact the IHS Public Affairs Office at 301-443-3593. Additional information about the IHS is available on the IHS website <http://www.ihs.gov> and <http://info.ihs.gov>

